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ABSTRACT

The Honors-Pass-Fail (H-P-F) grading system was introduced experimentally in the fall 1971 semester to replace the traditional A-B-C-F grading system in graduate courses in education at Herbert H. Lehman College. The purpose was to determine if H-P-F discriminated more sharply between exceptional and average student achievement than the conventional grading system; student and faculty reactions to the new grading system were also ascertained. The results of a follow-up study, which assessed the second year of the experiment, are in essential agreement with those of the prior study, which evaluated the first year of H-P-F. The general findings of the follow-up study are as follows: a) H-P-F discriminated more sharply between exceptional and average student achievement than the A-B-C-F system; b) three out of four students in graduate education courses who had been previously graded by H-P-F approved it; c) about half the teaching staff approved H-P-F (of this number more than half of the graduate instructors but less than half of the nongraduate instructors endorsed it). (Related document is SP 006 979.) (Author)

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H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM IN GRADUATE EDUCATION COURSES AT HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE- FOLLOW-UP STUDY

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The H-P-F grading system was introduced experimentally in the fall, 1971 semester to replace the traditional A-B-C-F grading system in graduate education courses at Herbert H. Lehman College. The Lehman College Senate mandated that this grading system be evaluated by graduate students enrolled in education courses. During the fall, 1972 semester the Office of Educational Research of the Department of Education undertook this evaluation of the H-P-F grading system. Questionnaires were addressed to the faculty of the Department of Education and graduate students in the Teacher Education Program. The findings of this study,[1] which assessed student-faculty reactions to the H-P-F system and also compared the H-P-F and A-B-C-F grading systems as barometers of student achievement, are as follows:

1. The H-P-F system discriminated more sharply between exceptional and average student achievement than the A-B-C-F system.
2. Almost three out of four graduate education students graded under the H-P-F system approved it.
3. More than half the instructors who used H-P-F and about three-fourths of those instructors who did not, approved this three-point grading system.

The Lehman College Senate, at its December 20, 1972 meeting, authorized the Department of Education to continue the experimental Honors-Pass-Fail grading system in graduate education courses for a second year, subject to

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[1] Edward Frankel, "Comparison Of A-B-C-F And H-P-F Grading Systems in Graduate Education Courses at Herbert H. Lehman College, Final Complete Report," Office Of Educational Research, Department of Education, No. 72-1, December 1972

reevaluation of the grading system during the spring, 1973 term. The Senate Committee on Graduate Studies requested that the reevaluation be conducted by the Office of Educational Research during the spring, 1973 semester.

In preparing the current evaluation answers were sought to the following questions:

1. (a) What is the distribution of grades under the H-P-F system for the fall, 1972 and spring, 1973 semesters?
   (b) How does this distribution compare with the distribution for the fall, 1971 and spring, 1972 semesters?
2. (a) How do the students in graduate courses during the spring, 1973 semester evaluate the H-P-F system?
   (b) How does this student evaluation compare with the prior assessment?
3. (a) How does the education faculty evaluate the H-P-F system in the spring, 1973 semester?
   (b) How does this evaluation compare with their previous assessment?

Therefore, this study is presented in three parts:

I. Distribution of Honors-Pass-Fail Grades in Graduate Education Courses;

II. Graduate Student Evaluation to the H-P-F System; and

III. Faculty Evaluation of H-P-F System.

I. DISTRIBUTION OF HONORS-PASS-FAIL GRADES IN GRADUATE EDUCATION COURSES

Previous Study

The 1971-72 study[1] compared the distribution of grades under the H-P-F and A-B-C-F systems. In the fall, 1971 semester, 20.6 percent of all grades were H's, and in the spring, 1972 semester the percentage rose to 35.3, a significant gain of 14.7 percent. The percentages of A grades during the corresponding semesters in 1970-71 were 49.5 percent and 53.0 percent, respectively. Since the H-P-F grading system yielded fewer "highest possible grades," it was concluded that H-P-F was a better discriminator between exceptional and average student achievements in graduate education courses than the A-B-C-F system.

Present Study

Grade distribution data for the fall, 1972 and spring, 1973 semesters were compared with data from 1971-72 making it possible to study H-P-F data for two successive years, and to detect trends in grading practices. The number of graduate education courses, sections, grades, and average registers for 1971-72 and for 1972-73 are posted in Table I.

TABLE I

GRADUATE COURSES IN EDUCATION
1971-72 AND 1972-73

Year	fall 1971	spring 1972	1971-72	fall 1972	spring 1973*	1972-73
Courses	48	49	97	51	53	104
Sections	123	120	243	117	116	233
Grades	1734	1954	3688	2036	2279	4315
Aver. No. of Grades per Section	14.1	16.3	15.2	17.4	19.6	18.5

Source: Office of the Dean of Academic Planning

[1] Ibid.

*Six additional education courses were given in the spring, 1973 semester but data for these courses were not available.

Comparison of these data in Table I on an annual basis shows that the number of courses increased by seven; the number of sections decreased by ten; the number of grades increased by 627; and the average class register increased by 3.3, a growth of 21.7 percent.

Grade Distribution by Semester and Year

The distribution of grades under the H-P-F system for 1971-72 and for 1972-73 are presented in Table II.

TABLE II

H-P-F GRADE DISTRIBUTION IN GRADUATE EDUCATION COURSES
1971-72 AND 1972-73

Semester	Total No. Grades	H		P		F		W		Abs		Inc	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
fall 1971	1734	358	20.6	1236	71.3	2	0.1	26	1.5	0	0.0	112	6.5
spring 1972	1954	690	35.3	1172	60.0	13	0.7	22	1.1	0	0.0	57	2.9
1971-72	3688	1048	28.4	2408	65.3	15	0.4	48	1.3	0	0.0	169	4.6
fall 1972	2036	513	25.2	1375	67.5	9	0.4	28	1.4	2	0.1	109	5.4
spring 1973	2279	639	28.0	1516	66.5	13	0.6	30	1.3	0	0.0	81	3.6
1972-73	4315	1152	26.7	2891	67.0	22	0.5	58	1.3	2	0.1	190	4.4

Source: Office of the Dean of Academic Planning

Table II reveals that there were almost twice as many H grades in the spring, 1972 semester as in the fall, 1971 semester, a difference of 14.7 percent which is statistically significant.[1] From fall, 1972 to spring, 1973 the percentage of H grades increased by 2.8 percent, which is also statistically significant.[2] From

[1] Chi square value was 97.53 which is significant beyond the .01 level.
[2] Chi square value was 4.57 which is significant at the .05 level.

fall, 1971 to fall, 1972 the percentage of H grades increased by 4.6,[1] and from spring, 1972 to spring, 1973 the percentage of H grades declined 7.3 percent; changes which are statistically significant.[2] Significant gains in H grades were recorded in the fall semesters, and significant losses in the spring semesters, yielding net annual changes that are not statistically significant.[3] Within the school years, the differences were much greater in 1971-72 than in 1972-73, indicating greater uniformity in the use of H grades in the second year of the experiment than in the first year.

Grade Distribution by Curricular Areas

The grade distribution for 1972-73 was also examined by curricular areas and then compared with the distribution for 1971-72. Data describing grade distribution for 1972-73 are presented in Table III.

TABLE III

GRADE DISTRIBUTION BY CURRICULAR AREAS IN EDUCATION
1972-73

Areas	Sections	Total Grades		H		P		F		Others	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
EDC	18	445	10.3	174	39.1	265	59.6	1	0.2	5	1.1
EDE	148	2797	64.9	665	23.8	1966	70.3	15	0.5	151	5.4
EDG	29	429	9.9	59	13.8	306	71.3	4	0.9	60	14.0
EDI	14	256	5.9	145	56.6	100	39.1	1	0.4	10	3.9
EDM	5	59	1.4	21	35.6	32	54.2	0	0.0	6	10.2
EDS	19	329	7.6	88	26.7	222	67.5	1	0.3	18	5.5
Total	233	4315	100.0	1152	26.7	2891	67.0	22	0.5	250	5.8

Source: Office of the Dean of Academic Planning

[1] Chi square value was 11.11 which is significant at the .01 level.
[2] Chi square value was 26.16 which is significant beyond the .01 level.
[3] Chi square value was 2.91 which is not significant.

From Table III it is evident that the highest percentage of H grades was in the EDI (Media) courses, and the lowest in EDG (Guidance). The EDE (General Education and Reading) courses which contributed 64.9 percent of all grades had 23.8 percent H's. EDG had the highest percentage of P grades, 71.3 percent, and EDI, the lowest, 39.1 percent. In EDE courses there were 70.3 percent P grades.

Data describing grade distribution for 1971-72 are presented in Table IV.

TABLE IV

GRADE DISTRIBUTION BY CURRICULAR AREAS IN EDUCATION
1971-72

Areas	Sections	Total Grades		H		P		F		Others	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
EDC	15	319	8.7	148	46.4	165	51.7	1	0.3	5	1.6
EDE	164	2554	69.3	774	30.3	1636	64.1	9	0.3	135	5.3
EDG	26	396	10.7	45	11.4	301	76.0	1	0.2	49	12.4
EDI	4	61	1.6	32	52.5	29	47.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
EDM	2	11	0.3	0	0.0	11	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
EDS	15	171	4.6	29	17.0	129	75.4	2	1.2	11	6.4
EDX*	17	176	4.8	20	11.4	137	77.8	2	1.1	17	9.7
Total	243	3688	100.0	1048	28.4	2408	65.3	15	0.4	217	5.9

Source: Office of the Dean of Academic Planning

Table IV shows that the highest percentage of H grades was in the EDI courses and the lowest in EDS. In EDE courses, which contributed 69.3 percent of all grades, 30.3 percent were H's. The highest percentage of P grades was in EDG (exclusive of EDM which had only 11 grades, all P's) and the lowest was in EDI. Of the EDE grades, 64.1 percent were P's.

*EDX was not given in 1972-73 and therefore was excluded from the comparison with 1971-72.

The 1971-72 distribution by curricular areas as compared to 1972-73 reveals higher percentages of H grades in EDC and EDE courses (7.3 percent and 6.5 percent respectively), but lower percentages of H grades in the other areas--EDG by 2.4 percent, EDI by 4.1 percent, and EDS by 9.7 percent. In EDE courses the percentage of H grades dropped by 6.5 percent.

Discussion

Under the A-B-C-F system, half the grades were A's, and the remainder were B's, with very few C's, and practically no F's. H-P-F was therefore introduced with the hope that a clearer distinction would be made between execptional and average student achievement. H would be "awarded for genuine intellectual or creative performance, and/or for superlative mastery of the assigned work," and P would be given when "the student has done the assigned work and demonstrated a sufficient mastery of it." In contrast, A is defined simply as "excellent (90.0-100.0 percent)" and B as "good (80.0-89.0 percent)."

The introduction of a new three-point (H-P-F) grading system in place of a four-point (A-B-C-F) system presented several problems for instructors. The crucial question was whether instructors would make a distinction between H and A in grading students. At the end of the first semester of H-P-F, fall, 1971, 20.6 percent of all graduate grades in education courses were H's in sharp contrast to 49.5 percent of A's in the fall, 1970 semester. Thus, from fall, 1970 to fall, 1971 the proportion of the "highest possible grades" declined by 28.9 percent.

The Dean of Graduate Studies summarized the findings as follows:

"The data appears to indicate that the experiment has been successful. The statistics show that not only did the department as a whole grant roughly 30.0 percent fewer H grades in 1971 than A grades in the pre-

vious year, but also that each of the curriculums showed corresponding dropoff in the number of 'highest possible grades' granted."[1]

At the end of the second semester, spring, 1972, the percentage of H grades rose to 35.3, almost twice that of the previous semester. In spite of the increase in H grades, the proportion of highest possible grades was about 20.0 percent below the 53.0 percent A grades of spring, 1971 and averaged 28.4 percent for 1971-72.

The second year of H-P-F witnessed less fluctuation in the percentage of H grades for the two successive semesters of the 1972-73 school year. H grades were 25.2 percent and 28.0 percent, respectively, an average of 26.7 percent. The difference in annual average percentages of H grades for 1971-72 and 1972-73 was not statistically significant. More important, however, was the fact that the proportion of H grades was about half that of A grades. One may conclude, therefore, that with the H-P-F system there is greater discrimination between exceptional and average student achievement than with the A-B-C-F grading system.

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[1] Memorandum of February 7, 1972.

II. STUDENT EVALUATION OF H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

Student evaluation data of the H-P-F grading system were obtained by a questionnaire[1] containing the following inquiries:

1. How many graduate courses (not credits) in education have you completed prior to this semester (spring 1973)?
2. In how many courses have you been marked by the H-P-F grading system?
3. Your reaction to H-P-F grading system:

   approve_____; disapprove_____; uncertain_____.
4. If you disapprove or are uncertain, what alternative would you recommend?
5. Have you changed your mind about the H-P-F system?
6. If yes, describe the change.
7. Class and section in which the questionnaire is being completed.

In preparation for student balloting, all staff members who taught graduate courses in education received a letter dated April 23, 1973 informing them that a student evaluation of the H-P-F grading system was scheduled for the week of April 30, 1973. Envelopes containing student questionnaires and instructions for each of the 123 graduate education sections were distributed through the Office of Educational Research and the Graduate Studies Office.

The instructions specified that only students who completed graduate courses in education prior to the spring, 1973 semester and had been graded by the H-P-F system were to answer the questionnaire.

Population

The sample was representative of the total population with respect to curricular areas since responses were received from the following classes and

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[1] A complete copy of the student questionnaire is in Appendix A.

sections: eight out of eight in EDC; 59 of the 81 in EDE; six out of 13 in EDG; the two in EDM; eight of the 11 in EDS; and seven out of eight in EDI. The total number of respondents, 844, represented about 56.5 percent of the 1,494 students who were eligible to complete the questionnaire.[1] This was significantly fewer respondents than in the 1971-72 survey when 66.5 percent of the eligible graduate students answered a questionnaire.[2]

Questionnaire Responses

The responses to each of the six inquiries of the questionnaire were analyzed, and where appropriate, comparisons were made with the responses of the previous study. In all instances the data presented were derived from the responses to the student questionnaire.

Question I: Number of Graduate Education Courses Completed Prior to Spring, 1973

The number of graduate education courses by curricular area completed prior to the spring, 1973 semester, as reported by the respondents, are posted in Table V.

TABLE V

NUMBER OF GRADUATE COURSES COMPLETED BY STUDENTS PRIOR TO SPRING 1973

	EDE	EDC	EDG	EDI	EDM	EDS	Total
No. of Courses	2208	462	175	192	29	260	3326
No. of Students	529	122	56	63	13	61	844
Aver. No. Courses	4.2	3.8	3.1	3.1	2.2	4.3	3.9

[1]There were 1,467 matriculated TEP students of whom 334 were new entrants and 626 non-matriculants with 246 new entrants. Of the latter about 95.0 percent were enrolled in education courses. It is estimated that there were 1,494 graduate students who were eligible to participate in the survey.

[2]Chi square value was 27.43 which is significant beyond the .01 level.

Table V indicates that an average of four graduate education courses (3.9) were completed by the respondents prior to the spring, 1973 semester; the greatest number 4.3 was in Special Education (EDS) and the smallest (2.2) in Secondary Education (EDM).

The distribution of the number of graduate courses by curricular areas is given in Table VI.

TABLE VI

DISTRIBUTION OF NUMBER OF GRADUATE COURSES
BY CURRICULAR AREAS COMPLETED BY STUDENTS PRIOR TO SPRING 1973

No. of Courses	EDE		EDC		EDG		EDI		EDM		EDS		Total	
	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%
1-2	166	31.4	46	37.7	40	71.4	35	55.6	9	69.2	21	34.4	317	37.6
3-4	153	28.9	37	30.3	7	12.5	15	23.8	4	30.8	16	26.2	232	27.5
5-6	110	20.8	21	17.2	0	0.0	11	17.4	0	0.0	16	26.2	158	18.7
7-8	72	13.6	15	12.3	4	7.2	1	1.6	0	0.0	3	4.9	95	11.2
9-10	26	4.9	3	2.5	5	8.9	1	1.6	0	0.0	3	4.9	38	4.5
10+	2	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.4	4	0.5
Total	529	62.7	122	14.5	56	6.6	63	7.5	13	1.5	61	7.2	844	100.0

Table VI indicates that about one third of the respondents completed one to two courses; a fourth, three to four courses; a fifth, five to six courses; and a tenth, seven to eight courses. The completion of seven to eight courses represents four semesters of graduate studies, since practically all graduate education students are full-time teachers and are, therefore, restricted to six credits or two courses per semester.

Question 2: Number of Courses Graded by H-P-F System

The responses to the second question, "In how many courses have you been graded by the H-P-F grading system?" are given in Table VII.

TABLE VII

NUMBER OF COURSES GRADED BY H-P-F SYSTEM

	EDE	EDC	EDG	EDI	EDM	EDS	Total
No. of Courses	1700	388	141	171	28	175	2603
No. of Students	529	122	56	63	13	61	844
Aver. No. Courses	3.2	3.2	2.5	2.7	2.2	2.9	3.1

Table VII indicates that students had been graded by the H-P-F system in an average of three education courses—that is, of a total of 3,326 education courses (see Table V) completed, 2,603 or 78.3 percent had been graded by H-P-F.

The distribution of graduate courses marked by H-P-F is shown in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS MARKED BY H-P-F SYSTEM IN GRADUATE COURSES

No. of Courses	EDE		EDC		EDG		EDI		EDM		EDS		Total	
	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%	Stud	%
1-2	245	46.3	58	47.6	44	78.6	38	60.3	9	69.2	33	54.1	427	50.6
3-4	158	29.9	35	28.7	5	8.9	17	27.0	4	30.8	15	24.6	234	27.7
5-6	84	15.9	23	18.8	4	7.1	7	11.1	0	0.0	12	19.7	130	15.4
7-8	38	7.2	6	4.9	3	5.4	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	48	5.7
9-10	4	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.6	5	0.6
Total	529	62.7	122	14.4	56	6.6	63	7.5	13	1.5	61	7.2	844	100.0

Table VIII indicates that half the respondents have been graded by H-P-F in one to two courses, more than a fourth in three to four courses, 15.4 percent in five to six courses, and 5.7 percent in seven to eight courses.

Question 3: Reactions to H-P-F Grading System

Responses to the question, "Your reaction to the H-P-F system--approve, disapprove, or uncertain," are summarized in Table IX.

TABLE IX

REACTIONS TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

	Approve		Disapprove		Uncertain		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
EDE	398	75.8	63	12.0	64	12.2	525
EDC	104	85.2	9	7.4	9	7.4	122
EDG	45	80.4	5	8.9	6	10.7	56
EDI	49	77.8	8	12.7	6	9.5	63
EDM	5	38.4	4	30.8	4	30.8	13
EDS	48	78.7	6	9.8	7	11.5	61
Total	649	77.3	95	11.3	96	11.4	840

Table IX reveals that, with the exception of EDM with only 13 respondents, about three out of four graduate students in all curricular areas approved H-P-F, indicating general agreement among students regardless of the kinds of courses they had taken or were taking. The total number of disapproval and uncertain reactions were almost identical. Within each curricular area, there was also an almost equal division in disapproval and uncertain reactions.

A comparison of the student reactions to H-P-F for 1971-72 and 1972-73 is given in Table X.

TABLE X

COMPARISON OF STUDENT REACTIONS TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

	Total No.	Approve No.	Approve %	Disapprove No.	Disapprove %	Uncertain No.	Uncertain %	Chi Square
1971-72	765	557	72.8	124	16.2	84	11.0	8.15*
1972-73	840	649	77.3	95	11.3	96	11.4	

*Significant at the .05 level.

Table X indicates that from 1971-72 to 1972-73 approval increased by 4.5 percent, disapproval declined 4.9 percent, and uncertain increased 0.4 percent; these changes were statistically significant. From the first to the second year of the experiment more students approved H-P-F and fewer disapproved it.

A comparison also was made of the reactions of students graded under both H-P-F and A-B-C-F systems, and of those graded only by H-P-F. The two populations of students were selected on the basis of number of courses completed as compared to number of courses graded by H-P-F. It was assumed that students who completed more courses than were graded by H-P-F experienced both systems, and that the others had had only H-P-F experience. The reactions of the two groups to the H-P-F system were analyzed and their responses are posted in Table XI.

TABLE XI

REACTIONS TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM OF STUDENTS WITH H-P-F AND A-B-C-F EXPERIENCES AND WITH H-P-F ONLY

Groups	Total No.	Total %	Approve No.	Approve %	Disapprove No.	Disapprove %	Uncertain No.	Uncertain %	Chi Square
H-P-F and A-B-C-F	267	31.8	192	71.9	38	14.2	37	13.9	6.44*
H-P-F only	573	68.2	457	79.7	57	10.0	59	10.3	
	840	100.0	649	77.3	95	11.3	96	11.4	

*Significant at the .05 level.

Table XI indicates that those who had experienced both grading systems registered less approval by 7.8 percent, more disapproval by 4.2 percent, and more uncertainty by 3.6 percent. These differences were statistically significant. Over 70.0 percent of the first group approved H-P-F as compared to almost 80.0 percent of the second group, and despite the statistical significance of the difference, both groups gave their overwhelming support to H-P-F.

Question 4: Alternative Grading Systems

The alternative grading systems recommended by respondents who disapproved or were uncertain are posted in Table XII.

TABLE XII

ALTERNATIVE GRADING SYSTEMS
RECOMMENDED BY STUDENT RESPONDENTS

Systems	No.	%
(a) A-B-C-F	59	30.9
(b) A-B-C or D (no F's)	43	22.5
(c) A-B-C and no credits	28	14.7
(d) Satisfactory and no credits	17	8.9
(e) P/F	37	19.4
(f) Others	7	3.6
Total	191	100.0

Table XII shows that almost a third of the respondents preferred the A-B-C-F grading system; more than a fifth chose the A-B-C or D (no F's) system, a variant of the first choice; and about 15.0 percent opted for A-B-C-NC. The P/F system was also selected by almost a fifth (19.4 percent). These alternatives do not vary very much from those chosen in the 1971-72 study when the choices were largely A-B-C-F and P/F.

Questions 5 and 6: Changes in Evaluation Judgments of Students

The responses to the question, "Have you changed your mind about the H-P-F grading system?" are given in Table XIII.

TABLE XIII

CHANGES IN REACTIONS OF STUDENTS TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

	YES		NO		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
EDE	60	12.5	419	87.5	479
EDC	9	8.0	104	92.0	113
EDG	6	11.5	46	88.5	52
EDI	8	13.6	51	86.4	59
EDM	4	30.8	9	69.2	13
EDS	9	16.1	47	83.9	56
Total	96	12.4	676	87.6	772

Table XIII clearly indicates that the opinion of almost nine out of ten respondents about the H-P-F grading system did not change. In general this trend was found in each curricular area except EDM with only 13 responses.

For those who had second thoughts about H-P-F the nature of the change is posted in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV

NATURE OF CHANGES IN REACTIONS OF STUDENTS TO H-P-F SYSTEM*

Reactions	No.	%
(a) from approve to disapprove	25	26.6
(b) from approve to uncertain	24	25.5
(c) from disapprove to approve	12	12.8
(d) from disapprove to uncertain	6	6.4
(e) from uncertain to approve	13	13.8
(f) from uncertain to disapprove	14	14.9
(e) others	0	0.0
Total	94	100.0

The net results of the 94 changes posted in Table XIV registered the smallest gain for approval, about 25.0 percent, and the largest increase in disapproval, about 40.0 percent.

Discussion

H-P-F has gained the approval of three-fourths of the students in graduate education courses, all of whom have been graded by the system. The first year 72.8 percent of the respondents approved of H-P-F, and in its second year, 77.3 percent approved of it—a statistically significant gain of 4.5 percent. Over 70.0 percent of the students who had been graded by both H-P-F and A-B-C-F approved of H-P-F. Student support of H-P-F has been highly consistent. Close to 90.0 percent did not change their reactions to this system, and at least half of these had participated in the earlier study.

In both studies roughly two-thirds of the students who either disapproved or were uncertain about H-P-F recommended the A-B-C-F system, or a variant of it. The P/F system also attracted some attention, but to a considerably less degree.

*Two students did not indicate the nature of the change.

III. FACULTY EVALUATION OF H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

The Education Department faculty in the Day Session, School of General Studies, and the Graduate Studies Teacher Education Program were polled during the week of April 30, 1973 to determine their reactions of the H-P-F grading system. Questionnaires were mailed to all full-time and adjunct staff members, and a follow-up questionnaire was distributed one week later to all those who had not responded by May 4, 1973.

Faculty Questionnnaire

The faculty questionnaire[1] sought answers to the following six inquiries:

1. Number of graduate courses taught in which H-P-F grading system was used since fall 1971:

   none___ one___ two___ three___ four___ five___ six___

2. If you teach one or more graduate courses, indicate the number in each of the following curricular areas:

   EDC___ EDE___ EDG___ EDM___ EDS___ EDX___ EDI___

3. Your reactions to the H-P-F grading system:

   approve___; disapprove___; uncertain___.

4. If you disapprove or are uncertain, what alternative would you recommend?
5. Have you changed your mind about the H-P-F system?
6. If yes, describe the change.

Population

Questionnaires were sent to 83 full-time and 77 part-time faculty members--160 in all. The numbers and percentage of respondents are presented in Table XV.

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[1] A copy of the faculty questionnaire is in Appendix A.

TABLE XV

FACULTY RESPONDENTS TO H-P-F QUESTIONNAIRE

	Full-Time Faculty	Adjunct Faculty	Total
Number of Questionnaires Distributed	83	77	160
Number of Respondents	83	39	122
Percentage of Respondents	100.0	50.6	76.3

In general, three out of four (76.3 percent) staff members were participants in this faculty evaluation of the H-P-F grading system, all full-time faculty and half the adjunct faculty. This represented 90.4 percent of the total graduate instructional staff and 56.1 percent of the instructors who had not taught graduate courses in the past two years and therefore had had no experience with this grading system.

The proportion of respondents and non-respondents in the population in the present survey was compared to 1971-72 and is shown in Table XVI.

TABLE XVI

COMPARISON OF RESPONDENTS
IN THE 1971-72 AND 1972-73 STUDIES

	Distributed	Responded		No Response		Chi Square	
	Total No.	No.	%	No.	%		
1971-72	114	97	85.1	17	14.9		
1972-73	160	122	76.3	38	23.7	3.25	n.s.*

*Not significant

As can be seen from Table XVI, the percentage of respondents was 8.8 percent greater in 1971-72 than in 1972-73. This difference, however, was not statistically significant.

Question 1: Number of Graduate Courses Taught

To obtain a measure of how much experience the faculty had had with the H-P-F grading system, the questionnaire asked each staff member to indicate the number of graduate education courses taught since the fall, 1972 semester. Table XVII summarizes their responses.

TABLE XVII

NUMBER OF GRADUATE COURSES TAUGHT BY FACULTY RESPONDENTS 1972-73

	None		One or More		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Full-Time	22	26.5	61	73.5	83	100.0
Adjuncts	15	38.5	24	61.5	39	100.0
Both	37	30.3	85	69.7	122	100.0

Table XVII reveals that about three-fourths of the full-time faculty and about 60.0 percent of the adjunct respondents had taught one or more graduate courses in education since fall, 1972 semester. The actual number of graduate courses taught by these instructors are given in Table XVIII.

TABLE XVIII

NUMBER OF GRADUATE COURSES TAUGHT
BY EDUCATION FACULTY SINCE FALL 1972

No. of Classes	Full-Time		Adjuncts		Both	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
One	10	16.4	13	54.2	23	27.0
Two	10	16.4	5	20.8	15	17.7
Three	8	13.1	3	12.5	11	12.9
Four	16	26.2	1	4.2	17	20.0
Five	3	4.9	2	8.3	5	5.9
Six	10	16.4	0	0.0	10	11.8
Six plus	4	6.6	0	0.0	4	4.7
Total	61	100.0	24	100.0	85	100.0
Average	3.70		2.13		3.24	

As can be seen from Table XVIII, an average of three graduate classes had been taught by the Education Department faculty; full-time teachers had three to four classes and adjuncts two. About two-thirds of the full-time instructors as compared to less than a third of the adjunct instructors taught three or more classes. In general, full-time faculty had more experience with the H-P-F grading system than the part-time teachers.

Question 2: Number of Graduate Classes Taught by Curricular Areas

To determine the distribution of faculty respondents within the graduate curriculum, graduate instructors recorded the number of classes they were teaching during the spring, 1973 semester in each of the following curricular areas: EDC, EDE, EDG, EDI, EDM, and EDS. A comparison of the number of courses offered in each of these areas and the number taught by the respondents is given in Table XIX.

TABLE XIX

COMPARISON OF NUMBER OF GRADUATE SECTIONS OFFERED BY CURRICULAR AREAS AND NUMBER TAUGHT BY RESPONDENTS

Areas	Sections Offered No.	Sections Taught No.	Sections Taught %
EDE*	73	46	63.1
EDC	10	9	90.0
EDG	11	10	90.9
EDI	8	3	37.5
EDM	3	3	100.0
EDS	11	8	72.7
Total	116	79	68.1

From Table XIX it can be seen that the faculty respondents represented about two-thirds of the graduate classes offered. All curricular areas were represented; the sample may be regarded as not significantly different from the total population of graduate classes.[1]

Question 3: Reactions to H-P-F Grading System

Faculty reactions to the H-P-F grading system are summarized in Table XX.

*Exclusive of six EDE courses for which data was not available.

[1]Chi square value was 2.10 which is not significant.

TABLE XX

FACULTY REACTION TO THE H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

	Approval		Disapproval		Uncertain		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Full-Time Instructors								
Grad	30	49.2	21	34.4	10	16.4	61	100.0
Non-Grad	12	54.6	5	22.7	5	22.7	22	100.0
Total	42	50.6	26	31.3	15	18.1	83	100.0
Adjunct Instructors								
Grad	18	75.0	1	4.2	5	20.8	24	100.0
Non-Grad	4	26.7	5	33.3	6	40.0	15	100.0
Total	22	56.4	6	15.4	11	28.2	39	100.0
Full-Time and Adjuncts								
Grad	48	58.7	22	23.7	15	17.6	85	100.0
Non-Grad	16	43.2	10	27.1	11	29.7	37	100.0
Total	64	52.5	32	26.2	26	21.3	122	100.0

Table XX indicates that more graduate than non-graduate instructors approved of H-P-F—a difference that is not statistically significant.[1] Among the full-time graduate and non-graduate instructors there was greater agreement in their judgment of the H-P-F system than among the adjunct instructors. Also adjunct graduate instructors were more favorably disposed to this grading system than the full-time graduate instructors—75.0 percent as compared to 49.2 percent. The greatest disapproval came from full-time graduate instructors and from non-graduate adjunct instructors. Only one (4.2 percent) adjunct teaching graduate courses, disapproved. Non-graduate adjunct instructors registered the greatest uncertainty about H-P-F.

[1] Chi square value was 1.81 which is not significant.

Faculty reactions to the H-P-F grading system in this study were compared with those in the 1971-72 study and the results are posted in Talbe XXI.

TABLE XXI

COMPARISON OF FACULTY REACTIONS TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM IN THE 1971-72 AND 1972-73 STUDIES

	Total		Approve		Disapprove		Uncertain		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Chi Square
1971-72	97	100.0	55	56.7	31	32.0	11	11.3	3.99*
1972-73	122	100.0	64	52.5	32	26.2	26	21.3	

*Not significant.

Table XXI shows that the reaction of the faculty to H-P-F in 1972-73 was not significantly different from 1971-72, although there was about 5.0 percent more approval, 5.0 percent more disapproval, and 10.0 percent less uncertainty in the 1971-72 study.

Question 4: Alternative Grading Systems

Respondents who either disapproved or were uncertain about the H-P-F grading system were asked to recommend alternatives. Table XXII summarizes these alternatives.

TABLE XXII

ALTERNATIVE GRADING SYSTEMS CHOSEN BY RESPONDENTS

	A-B-C-F		A-B-C or D (no F's)		A-B-C-NC*		S and NC*		P/F		Others		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Full-Time Instructors													
Grad	8	25.8	1	3.2	11	35.5	3	9.7	0	0.0	8	25.8	31
Non-Grad	1	10.0	1	10.0	7	70.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	10.0	10
Total	9	22.0	2	4.9	18	43.9	3	7.3	0	0.0	9	21.9	41
Adjunct Instructors													
Grad	1	16.7	0	0.0	3	50.0	0	0.0	2	33.3	0	0.0	6
Non-Grad	3	27.3	2	18.2	6	54.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	11
Total	4	23.5	2	11.8	9	52.9	0	0.0	2	11.8	0	0.0	17
Full-Time and Adjuncts													
Grad	9	24.3	1	2.7	14	37.8	3	8.1	2	5.4	8	21.7	37
Non-Grad	4	19.1	3	14.3	13	61.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.7	21
Total	13	22.4	4	6.9	27	46.6	3	5.2	2	3.4	9	15.5	58

*NC means no credit.

Table XXII indicates that of the 58 respondents who disapproved or were uncertain, almost half opted for A-B-C-NC, and about a fourth chose A-B-C-F, the grading system used before H-P-F, and still in use in non-TEP graduate courses. The A-B-C-NC grading system was chosen more often than any other by both graduate and non-graduate full-time and adjunct faculty.

Question 5: Changes in Evaluation Judgments of Faculty

Table XXIII summarizes the responses to this question, "Have you changed your mind about the H-P-F system?"

TABLE XXIII

CHANGES IN RESPONSES TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM BY FACULTY

	YES		NO		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Full-Time Instructors					
Grad	12	19.7	49	80.3	61
Non-Grad	7	31.8	15	68.2	22
Total	19	22.9	64	77.1	83
Adjunct Instructors					
Grad	2	8.3	22	91.7	24
Non-Grad	1	6.7	14	93.3	15
Total	3	7.7	36	92.3	39
Full-Time and Adjuncts					
Grad	14	16.5	71	83.5	85
Non-Grad	8	21.6	29	78.4	37
Total	22	18.3	100	82.7	122

Table XXIII indicates that more than eight out of ten staff members had not changed their minds about the H-P-F grading system. However the greatest change occurred among full-time non-graduate faculty and the smallest change among adjunct undergraduate instructors.

Question 6: Nature of Change

The nature of the change registered by 22 faculty members was also analyzed, and it was found that 50.0 percent altered their judgments "from approve to disapprove," 40.0 percent "from approve to uncertain," 5.0 percent "from uncertain to approve," and 5.0 percent "from uncertain to disapprove." The tendency was for instructors to change their reactions from approval to either disapproval or uncertain. However, only 20 instructors were involved.

Comments by Faculty

Comments were made on their questionnaires by 12 full-time graduate instructors, four adjunct graduate instructors, and two adjunct undergraduate instructors--18 out of the 122 respondents. In most instances the comments were critical of H-P-F. Some typical comments were as follows:

Graduate instructors:

"I would like to try the H-P-NC since I would feel more comfortable giving a student 'no credit' than F."

"H-P-F rewards mediocrity and discourages superiority."

"H-P-F is translated to A-B-C-F by all concerned."

"H-P-F is farcical and the grad students know it."

"My change of mind is a reaction to the strong, continuous objections by graduate students and their constant demands for letter grades in connection with applications for position and further graduate study."

Graduate adjuncts:

"I find it very difficult to distinguish between P and F. An outstanding student is easy--H, an average is P, but a 'loafer' is C or D not P."

"A high average hard work is B not P."

"I disagree completely with H-P-F."

Discussion

For the faculty as a whole, approval declined by about 5.0 percent, disapproval increased by 5.0 percent, and uncertainty increased by 10.0 percent from the first to the second year of the experiment; these differences were not statistically significant.

However, an in-depth analysis of the reactions of graduate and non-graduate instructors reveals different response patterns. Graduate teachers supported H-P-F by 50.8 percent the first year and 58.7 percent the second year, a change not statistically significant.[1] Non-graduate teachers approval was 70.0 percent for 1971-72, and 43.2 percent for 1972-73, a 26.8 percent decline which was statistically significant.[2]

In 1972-73 instructors of graduate courses appeared to be slightly more supportive of H-P-F. Non-graduate instructors, on the other hand, fluctuated in their reactions and tended to be less supportive and more uncertain.

Comparison of Student and Faculty Reactions to H-P-F

The 1971-72 study showed that significantly more students than faculty approved of H-P-F, 72.8 percent as compared to 56.7 percent. Faculty disapproval, 32.0 percent, was almost twice as great as student disapproval, 16.2 percent; and uncertain reactions were about the same—11.0 percent students to 11.3 percent faculty.

The responses of students and faculty in the 1972-73 study are compared in Table XXIV.

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[1]Chi square value was 0.50 which is not significant.
[2]Chi square value was 5.22 which is significant at the .05 level.

TABLE XXIV

COMPARISON OF STUDENT AND FACULTY REACTION TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM 1972-73

	Students		Faculty		Difference (Stud-Fac)	Chi Square
	No.	%	No.	%		
Approved	649	77.3	64	52.5	+ 24.8	
Disapproved	95	11.3	32	26.2	- 14.9	35.5**
Uncertain	96	11.4	26	21.3	- 9.9	
Total	840	100.0	122	100.0		

**Significant beyond the .01 level.

Again, in 1972-73 the majority of students and faculty approved of the H-P-F system, but greater support, 24.8 percent, came from the students. There was greater faculty disapproval, 14.9 percent, and also greater faculty uncertainty, 9.9 percent.

From the first to the second year student approval increased by 4.5 percent,[1] a statistically significant gain, whereas faculty support declined 4.2 percent,[2] which is not statistically significant.

[1] Chi square value was 4.24 which is significant at the .05 level.
[2] Chi square value was 0.39 which is not significant.

SUMMARY

The Office of Educational Research was mandated by the Lehman College Senate to conduct an evaluation of the H-P-F grading system based on reactions by graduate students enrolled in graduate courses in education at the end of the second year. This report is a follow-up evaluation of the H-P-F grading system introduced experimentally in the fall, 1971 semester for grading graduate courses in education at Herbert H. Lehman College.

This study followed the format of the 1971-72 study and addressed itself to (I) an analysis of the grade distribution in graduate education courses, (II) graduate students' reactions to H-P-F, and (III) faculty evaluation of the H-P-F grading system. Comparisons were made between 1971-72 and 1972-73 data.

I. Grade Distribution

The percentage of H grades increased from 25.2 percent to 28.1 percent from fall, 1972 to the spring, 1973 semester, a significant gain of 2.9 percent. In the previous year, for the corresponding semesters H grades were 20.6 and 35.3 percent, respectively, a very significant gain of 14.7 percent. The annual percentages of H grades for 1971-72 and 1972-73 were 28.4 and 26.7, respectively, a difference of 1.7 percent which is not statistically significant. The percentage of H grades showed greater variation during the first year (1971-72) than in the second year (1972-73) of the H-P-F experiment.

II. Student Evaluation

Questionnaire data were obtained from 56.5 percent of the graduate students in a representative sampling of graduate education courses, significantly fewer respondents than the 66.5 percent of the 1971-72 study. About half of the students

had been graded by the H-P-F system in one to two courses, and therefore had participated in the previous survey. The H-P-F grading system was approved by 77.3 percent of the student respondents and disapproved by 11.3 percent; 11.4 percent were uncertain. Approval was significantly greater than in the previous survey by 4.5 percent, whereas disapproval declined by 4.9 percent, and uncertain reactions increased by 0.4 percent.

Among students who disapproved or were uncertain about H-P-F, 30.9 percent recommended A-B-C-F as an alternative grading system; 22.5 percent recommended A-B-C or D (no F's); 14.7 percent opted for A-B-C and no credits; and 19.4 percent chose Pass/Fail.

About one out of ten respondents changed their opinions about the H-P-F grading system. Of these, about one fourth changed from approve to disapprove, another fourth from approve to uncertain, and another fourth from disapprove to approve or from uncertain to approve.

III. Faculty Evaluation

H-P-F evaluation responses were obtained from all full-time staff members and half the adjuncts, a total of 122 instructors or 76.3 percent of the total teaching faculty. This represented 90.4 percent of graduate instructional staff and 56.1 percent of the non-graduate instructors. This population was not significantly different from the 1971-72 study population—about two-thirds had taught three or more graduate classes, and probably had participated in the 1971-72 study.

Faculty reactions to H-P-F were as follows: 52.5 percent approved, 26.2 percent disapproved, and 21.3 percent were uncertain. These reactions were not significantly different from the previous evaluation when 56.7 percent approved,

32.0 percent disapproved, and 11.3 percent were uncertain. However, differences in reactions to H-P-F were found among graduate and non-graduate course instructors in the two studies. Graduate instructors were fairly consistent: 50.8 percent approved H-P-F in its first year to 58.7 percent in its second year, a change that was not significant. Non-graduate faculty respondents approved H-P-F by 70.0 percent and 43.2 percent, respectively, in the two successive surveys, a significant change of 26.8 percent.

The alternative grading system recommended by almost half of the respondents who either disapproved or were uncertain about H-P-F was A-B-C-NC, and almost a fourth opted for A-B-C-F, the original graduate education course grading system.

Relatively few staff members, 18.3 percent, changed their reactions to H-P-F. Half of these altered their judgments from approval to disapproval, and about 40.0 percent changed from approval to uncertain.

As in the previous survey, student approval for H-P-F was much greater than faculty support. However, student approval gained significantly from 72.8 percent to 77.3 percent. Whereas faculty support declined from 56.7 percent to 52.5 percent, a loss that was not statistically significant.

Conclusions

The findings of this study are in essential agreement with the findings in the previous study. The conclusions which can be drawn are as follows:

1. The H-P-F grading system was a better discriminator between exceptional and average student achievement in graduate courses in education than the A-B-C-F grading system.

2. Three out of four students in graduate education courses who were previously graded by H-P-F approved this system.

3. About half the faculty approved H-P-F grading, of these more than half the graduate instructors but less than half of non-graduate teachers approved.

HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE
OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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BRONX, NEW YORK 10468

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE — (212) 960-8167
TEP GRADUATE OFFICE — (212) 960-8171
STUDENT TEACHING AND FIELD EXPERIENCE OFFICE — (212) 960-3569

April 23, 1973

Dear Colleague:

In September 1971, the H-P-F grading system was introduced on an experimental basis for all graduate courses in education for one year. The Lehman College Senate Committee on Graduate Studies approved this grading system with the proviso that it be evaluated by graduate students during the Fall 1972 semester. This evaluation was conducted and a report submitted. The Committee again asked for a student evaluation to be carried out in the Spring 1973 semester.

The week of April 30, 1973 has been set aside for this student evaluation. May I ask you to cooperate and help us to carry out this mandate by doing the following:

1. During the week of April 23,1973, please appoint or elect (in each graduate education course that you teach) a student to serve as class evaluation director.

2. During the week of April 30, 1973, pick up a package of evaluation questionnaires (one for each graduate course that you teach) in the Office of Education Research - Room B-19, Carman Hall any time between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. After 5 p.m. these questionnaires may be obtained from the Graduate Office in Room B-24, Carman Hall.

3. Permit the class evaluator to distribute, collect and return questionnaires on the day the poll is conducted, to either the Office of Educational Research or Graduate Office.

4. The questionnaire is very brief and requires only a few minutes to complete. Please conduct the poll no later than May 4, 1973. For further information, call Dr. Frankel, Director of Educational Research in B-19, Carman Hall or call 960-8591.

I regret this imposition upon you and your students but there seems to be no alternative.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Archie L. Lacey

Archie L. Lacey
Chairman

ALL/ag

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April 30, 1973

Student Evaluation Of H-P-F Grading System
For Graduate Courses In Education

Spring 1973

The Lehman College Senate approved the H-P-F grading system for graduate courses in education on an experimental basis for one year starting with the Fall, 1971 semester. It's continuation is contingent in part on student evaluation. An evaluation was conducted during the Fall, 1972 semester. The Senate Committee on Graduate Studies has requested a second student evaluation of the H-P-F system to be conducted in the Spring, 1973 semester. Will you please answer the questionnaire that follows and return it to the class evaluation director or your instructor no later than May 4, 1973.

Only students who took graduate courses in education at Lehman College during the Fall 1971, Spring 1972, and the Fall 1972 semesters and were therefore graded by the H-P-F system, should answer this questionnaire.

Do not answer this questionnaire if (a) you answered this questionnaire in another class; (b) you are taking courses for the first time this Spring 1973 semester.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Detach here.

Student Evaluation Of H-P-F Grading System For Graduate Courses In Education-Spring 1973

1. How many graduate courses (not credits) in education have you completed prior to this semester (Spring 1973)? _____

2. In how many courses have you been marked by the H-P-F grading system? _____

3. Your reaction to the H-P-F system (check one).

   (a) approve____ (b) disapprove____ (c) uncertain____

4. If you disapprove or are uncertain, what alternative would you recommend? Check one.

   (a) A-B-C-F system ____
   (b) A-B-C or D (no F's) ____
   (c) A-B-C and no credits ____
   (d) S (satisfactory) and NC (no credit)____
   (e) P/F system ____
   (f) others_____ (indicate) ____

5. Have you changed your mind about the H-P-F system? Yes___ No___

6. If yes, describe the change by checking one of the following:

   (a) from approve to disapprove ____
   (b) from approve to uncertain ____
   (c) from disapprove to approve ____
   (d) from disapprove to uncertain ____
   (e) from uncertain to approve ____
   (f) from uncertain to disapprove ____
   (g) others_____ (indicate) ____

7. This questionnaire is being completed in course_____ section_____.

HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE
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April 30, 1973

Faculty Evaluation of H-P-F Grading System
for Graduate Courses in Education

Spring 1973

Dear Colleague:

A poll of the graduate student reactions to the H-P-F grading system, mandated by the Lehman College Senate Committee on Graduate Studies, is being conducted.

It is equally important to obtain faculty reactions to the H-P-F grading system. Will you therefore, please complete the questionnaire below and return it to Dr. Frankel, Director of Educational Research in Room B19 Carman Hall no later than May 4, 1973. Place completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope and sign your name on the outside. This procedure is for recording respondants not responses.

Sincerely yours,

Archie L. Lacey
Archie L. Lacey
Chairman

ALL:rs

Detach here.

Faculty Evaluation of H-P-F Grading System for Graduate Courses in Education - Spring 1973

1. Number of graduate courses taught in which H-P-F grading system was used since Fall 1971.

   none___ one___ two___ three___ four___ five___ six___

2. If you teach one or more graduate courses, indicate the number in each of the following curricular areas: (NOTE: indicate only those courses for the current, Spring, 1973 semester.)

   EDC___ EDE___ EDG___ EDM___ EDS___ EDX___ EDI___

3. Your reactions to H-P-F grading system: check one: approve__, disapprove__, uncertain__

4. If you disapprove or are uncertain, what alternative would you recommend? Check one.

   (a) A-B-C-F system ___
   (b) A-B-C or D (no F's) ___
   (c) A-B-C and no credits ___
   (d) S (satisfactory) and NC (no credit) ___
   (e) P/F system ___
   (f) others (indicate)_____ ___

5. Have you changed your mind about the H-P-F system? Yes___ No___

6. If yes, describe the change by checking one of the following:

   (a) from approve to disapprove ___
   (b) from approve to uncertain ___
   (c) from disapprove to approve ___
   (d) from disapprove to uncertain ___
   (e) from uncertain to approve ___
   (f) from uncertain to disapprove ___
   (g) others (indicate)_____ ___

COMMENTS: Please use back of this sheet.

Please return to Dr. Edward Frankel, Room B 19 Carman, no later than May 4, 1973.